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U.S. Aide's Ties to Contras Challenged

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WASHINGTON, Sept. 4 — The chairman of the House intelligence committee said today that the involvement of a ranking member of the National Security Council with the rebels fighting to overthrow the Nicaraguan Government may have violated the law.

Representative Lee H. Hamilton, Democrat of Indiana, also said that his group, known formally as the House Select Committee on Intelligence, would begin hearings Sept. 17 to investigate the relationship between the rebels and the council. He said the hearings would also examine how the Reagan Administration plans to spend the \$27 million in nonmilitary aid to the rebels approved by Congress just before its August recess.

Administration officials have acknowledged that the National Security Council official, Lieut. Col. Oliver L. North, has been involved in some rebel activities and assisted in some private fund raising, including using a Government plane in Central America and elsewhere. In addition, a senior Administration official has said Colonel North gave military advice to the Nicaraguan Democratic Force, the largest rebel group.

'Fairly Broad' Prohibition

Mr. Hamilton said the activities of Colonel North could have violated the Boland Amendment, which prohibited any Government intelligence agency from spending money to support the rebels, who are known as contras. Mr. Hamilton said the prohibition was "fairly broad" and would include a ban on spending funds on travel in connection with activities of the rebels.

"It seems to me that the N.S.C. is involved in intelligence activities and I don't see how they can escape the Boland Amendment," he said.

"He had to travel, he had to do some things that involved spending money," he said, referring to Colonel North. "If Colonel North was spending money to meet them that is an expenditure of funds."

Mr. Hamilton added: "I do not prejudge the question of legality. But I do have questions about whether what they did was in compliance with the Boland Amendment."

Mr. Hamilton said the Administration "has a tough case to make" to show that it did not violate the law. He added that the question was both "legal and political" and included whether the Administration "violated the understanding that existed."

Since the reports of Colonel North's involvement, the President and senior Administration officials have said he neither broke the law nor violated the spirit of the law.

The so-called Boland Amendment was approved last fall and was to be in effect for the fiscal year 1986, which ends Sept. 30. It says: "During the fiscal year 1986, no funds available to the Central Intelligence Agency, the Department of Defense, or any other agency or entity of the United States involved in intelligence activities may be obligated or expended for the purpose or which would have the effect of supporting, directly or indirectly, military or paramilitary operations in Nicaragua by any nation, group organization, movement or individual."

The President's executive order covering the nation's intelligence agencies describes the National Security Council as "the highest executive branch entity that provides review of, guidance for and direction to the conduct of all national foreign intelligence, counterintelligence and special activities."

Senators to Get Briefing

Mr. Hamilton said he was unsure whether the Boland Amendment was still in effect until Oct. 1 or had been repealed when the President signed the bill for the \$27 million in military aid. But it is clear the Boland Amendment loses effect Oct. 1.

On Thursday, the chairman and vice

chairman of the Senate intelligence committee will be briefed on Colonel North's involvement by Robert C. McFarlane, the assistant to the President for national security affairs.

Senator Dave Durenberger, Republi-

can of Minnesota and the chairman of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, has not yet planned any hearings on the National Security Council involvement with the Nicaraguan rebels.

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